

First To Hope

The Salvation of
Old Testament
Saints

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First To Hope is a chapter that I cut out of my book, ***“Escape From Paganism, How a Roman Catholic Can Be Saved”***, prior to publication. I believe the information contained herein, though, is useful. I hope you find it so.

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Chapter 3

The First to Hope

So far this has been kind of a “dirty” book. “Dirty” from the standpoint that it has taken all men back to the “dirt” in that they die and their bodies go to hades, which means the grave. Dirty, also, from the standpoint of a lot of stuff has been left hanging. In this regard messy might be a better term.

From here on out the subject matter gets cleaned. There is hope for man and this will now be dealt with. Let’s start again with God, Adam, Eve, and the demon possessed serpent.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Genesis 3:15

Here God informs Satan (the demon in the serpent) that there is going to be a conflict between him and the offspring of the seed of the woman. The prophesy says that Satan will injure this seed, but the seed will destroy him. In short, the head crusher is coming.

Further prophesied is the fact that the seed of the woman will be the product of a virgin birth. Where does it say this? Right here!

In the Bible – the seed, as regards human descendants, is always refers to as the seed of a man. Two examples, the first is God talking to Abraham, the other is a promise from God to David—both promises are still in effect and active today:

indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Genesis 22:17

I have sworn to David My servant, I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations.”

Psalms 89:3-4

As we have seen, in this case God refers to the Seed of the Woman, not of Adam. It is pointing to the virgin birth of Christ.

Adam understood this not just a judgment but also a promise to him, the woman, and their posterity. It was a promise of hope. The outworking of this hope is expressed in his choice of name for his wife, Eve. The name means the mother of all living not of all the dying. Life is the vision, not death.

Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

“Thou shall surely die,” was the penalty for eating of the tree, remember? It was shown that this phrase could also be interpreted as “In dying thou shalt die.” We discussed this as the process of life – birth – problems of life – physical death.

There is another aspect of it. In dying thou shalt die. When you undergo physical death there could still be another death awaiting you, the second death. But the “promise” was the pathway to eternal life. The “hope” was the way that it would be realized.

Adam placed his hope in the promise of the Lord of the Seed of the Woman. What was this hope?

to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:12

This hope, expressed in his choice of name for his wife, shows his new faith in the Lord, and, as we will see later, Eve also believed. God then showed them that even though death was the wage of their sin, that this death could be a “vicarious” death, that is someone else could die for their sin. This was symbolized by God sacrificing two animals and clothing Adam and Eve with the skins from them. The “clothing” of Adam and Eve symbolized Atonement, the covering of their sin.

Look the actions taken to cover their nakedness (guilt). Adam and Eve, apart from their faith (hope), were passive. None of this action was their “doing.” They had believed in God’s promise. Remember that word “doing” it means “work.”

Yes, Adam and Eve were **born from above** at instant of their belief. Their eternal life assured, no fear of the second death. It was not of their works or “doing,” but of God. Notice that God refers to the Trinity in this passage -- “*become like one of us*”.

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:21-24

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Consider Eve's expression of faith and hope in the verse below. The name "Cain" means "gotten one." Further, she exclaims that this man child was "with the help of the Lord." The Hebrew name for "the Lord" she used is the proper name for God – the supreme, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent God. She has been converted. She and Adam are looking for deliverance from this world of sin by the coming head crusher. Eve thought Cain was it. Cain was not.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a man child with the help of the LORD."

Genesis 4:1

What follows is THE classic case of man made religion in violent or deadly opposition to the Godly exercising their worship to the living God.

Abel, undoubtedly following the teaching he received from his Godly parents, offers an animal sacrifice to God, signifying that he knows death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23) and that a vicarious death WILL occur and apply to his sins, through faith.

As we know from Matthew 23:35, God has reckoned Abel "righteous." Further, in Luke 11:50, Christ identifies Abel as being a prophet. This latter "office" identifies him as having the Spirit of Christ within him –

As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.

1 Peter 1:10-12

Declared Righteous and guided by the Spirit, Abel was a regenerated person, "born from above." As you will see throughout, God teaches us in His Word that righteous is imputed through faith. That is this issue here.

Cain offers the works (doings) of his hands. He has rejected the idea that death is the wages of sin. He has worked hard and God had better bless his efforts! God does not, and Cain gets angry with Abel and kills him.

Again, Eve gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for

his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

Genesis 4:2-14

God had "regard" for Abel's offering, but not Cain's. Cain was angry at God and complained to Abel about it in the field. Can't you just hear Abel trying to teach Cain, that all men, INCLUDING, Cain are sinners and subject to eternal punishment because of it? Cain was a man of the world, Abel a son of God. Jesus made this statement about himself and His "brothers in the Lord"

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

John 15:18-19

Remember, since the fall, man (in Adam) is at enmity with God. Abel is a "son of God" (see Genesis 6:2 & 4. Cain, angry at God and hating what he is hearing in the field from Abel, kills Abel.

Look at the end of the above passage. God has cast out Cain. He, Cain, cries that his punishment is too great to bear. "God" he says in effect "You cannot do this to me!" When you read this you have to be reminded of Christ on the Great White Throne of Judgement – when the "doers" come before Him and plead their case –

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

The Lord has told Cain to depart, and will tell him so again again at the Judgement Throne. Cain's murder of Abel was the end result of his lawlessness. Lawlessness? Yes, he rejected the law, or government, of God. The teaching, or law, from God was that man had to be reconciled to Him. That the reconciliation could only occur by a death for sin, but that this reconciliation or "atonement" could be through a vicarious victim. It was not clear yet to any man, who this victim would be or when he would come, but they knew he was coming. The animal sacrifices were graphic reminders of death for sin, but saved no one. Only faith in The Promise of God, of the Coming Seed of the Woman, could save them. Cain, like all spiritually dead people, reject this.

Now Cain is driven out from the face of God – separated, dead in his sin –alone-without God-in the world. Righteous Abel, however, lives. He lives today and will live forever in the presence of the Lord.

The murder of Abel is the first recorded human death in the bible. A son of "this generation" has murdered a son of God. It is one of many where the sons of "this generation" kill the son's of God, who are sons of another "generation." In Mt 23:35, Christ says that "this generation" (the Adamic race) will be held responsible for these deaths. In the book of the Revelations, it says –

Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Revelations 14:18-20

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Let's progress to another Genesis story of hope.

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and

went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.

Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the LORD it will be provided."

Genesis 22:1-14

Wow! What have we here? Why did God test Abraham? Did not God, who is all knowing and can discern our thought, know what Abraham would do? Strange, no?

No! The purpose of the test was not that God could find out what Abraham would do, He did know already. One purpose of a test is for the student to learn. This is, perhaps, the most important purpose and so it is with God's tests on His people.

The test of Abraham, was also incidentally a test for Isaac, was to drive home to him the faithfulness of God to both of them, to humble them to Him, and to enable them to see what was in their hearts. Did Abraham know the extent to which he would stand with the Lord before this? Would he, as the Lord says in Luke ---

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

Luke 14:26-27

Prior to this event, Abraham had declared His faith in the promise of God and had been declared RIGHTEOUS. Here is Genesis 15:6 –

Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Keep in mind that in Adam, there are NONE righteous, no not one that does good. (Ps 14:11-3, Ps 130:10-12, Rom 3:10-12) As we have seen above, to be declared “righteous, is to be justified.”

Abraham was **“born from above – born again.”** He was being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. This “test” was to teach him greater reliance upon God in the sanctification process. He knew that God would provide the Lamb. He trusted God’s character and the teaching/leadership of the Spirit. He was also ready to do whatever God commanded him to do. Abraham’s character had been radically changed. He was a new creation.

Throughout the ordeal, Abraham had faith that God would provide the sacrifice. Which God did. The purpose of a sacrifice was to atone for sin, to reconcile man to God. Since man can do no good relative to God’s standard of good, (see Romans 3:10 & 23) then, if God is to be propitiated (reconciled), God will have to provide the sacrifice. The ram entangled in the bush was provided by God, but the sacrifice of this animal, as well as the millions of animals sacrificed in Israel over about a 1,200 year period of time were only demonstrations of the great atonement Jesus Christ would provide when He was hung upon that cross. The blood of bulls and goats did not propitiate for sin.

But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Hebrews 10:3-4

Consider Isaac.

And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also.

Galatians 4:28-29

“In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, --

Luke 13:28

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

John 3:3

Isaac will be in the Kingdom of God, as will Abraham, Jacob, all the prophets and, I believe, Adam and Eve. They will be there because they have been, by faith, reckoned as Righteous, Justified. They were reborn of the Spirit and sanctified. If you, by faith, and faith alone –

sacraments do not count -- have received Jesus Christ as your savior, someday you, too, will be with all those who have preceded us to the Kingdom of God. In all of the testimonies above, Adam and Eve, Abel, Abraham and Isaac, God illumined their paths, enlightened their understanding. Illumination is a ministry of the Holy Spirit to believers.

"I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them

Isaiah 42:16

These stories are related from "the beginning" to show you that these old timers, as we, have to come by faith to God in order to be declared righteous and sanctified, thereby being admitted into His family to enjoy the blessings of eternal life. All of those prior to Christ's death on the cross who are part of this family expressed their faith in the HOPE of Christ –

to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Ephesians 1:12-13

Paul, (the writer of Ephesians) includes himself in the "we" as he was a Jew. The nation Israel was looking for their Messiah. All those who believed prior to the cross had hope in the work of the Seed of the Woman. We, since the cross, have faith in Christ's **finished work** upon the cross.